1: Jenness--229-230 (1913-16) 1922 Copper Eskimo
116, 532

"... the [230] natives understood pictures without any difficulty, and could draw figures of human beings, especially their clothing, with some approach to accuracy. There [sic] drawings of animals, however, and even of the implements that they used every day of their lives, were extremely poor. Probably the making and clothing of dolls, and the cutting out of skins for their own clothes, when the whole pattern is present to the mind beforehand, had accustomed them to think abstractly of the shape and details of the human figure. On the other hand they seldom or never make toys in the shape of animals as other Eskimos do, and so less often conceive of the separate details of the animal body and combine them abstractly into one proportionate whole."

531 curved lines apart from circles unless they were conditioned by the curved surfaces of the objects on which they were engraved, as was the case with Figure 187a.[1]

532 32 [524] A few bone carvings, all very crude, are illustrated in Figures 125, 126. The only naturalistic forms are the bird figures attached to the needle-case in Figure 95. Among a child's toys was a figure of a loon carved from antler, and a tiny antler box with wooden bottom that represented the bird's nest (Figure 188).

Figure 188. Bone carving. IV.D.605. 1/1.

532 826 12 Noticing that children frequently outlined with their knives, in the hard snow, figures of human beings or their clothing, I distributed a number of notebooks and pencils and asked both adults and children to fill them with sketches. The new pastime amused them, and they quickly furnished me with about a hundred drawings of men and women in which the faces and hands received far less attention than the details of the tattooing and clothing. Those natives whom I watched began indifferently at the shoulder or the foot, and moved the pencil back and forth in every direction with no more dexterity than we expect from a 2 or 3 year-old child, and the results (Figure 189) were not [825] dissimilar. Their drawings of animals such as the caribou, every part of whose anatomy was as familiar to them as their own, were even cruder; and how a map could indicate the geographical features of a country seemed beyond their comprehension. Evidently the sketching of scenes, like writing, was a totally new concept to them; yet I cannot believe that they lack talent, or that the second or third generation from today will not show as much proficiency in drawing as other Eskimo.

284 KNOTS

The Copper Eskimo made use of several different kinds of knots, all, except perhaps one, familiar enough to Europeans; but whether they had special names for them I did not discover. To finish off the end of a braid of sinew, or knot the end of a line, they used the common thumb knot; the "figure of eight" appeared to be unknown. Two lines were generally joined by the reef knot, but if one had a loop at the end a single sheet bend was employed. The loop itself might be made in two ways, by cutting a small slit in the end of the sealskin thong and passing the other end through it, thereby producing a kind of slip-

[1] A pair of men's outer trousers, collected by Captain Collinson at Cambridge Bay in 1852 and now in the British Museum, is decorated with a "column" of chevrons, the only instance I have seen of this design.

[TEXT CONTINUED ON PAGE 148]

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Figure 189. Drawings by a Copper Eskimo woman.

29: Jenness E-5 (1914-1916) 1959
ND8 Copper Eskimo ND8

tions in the dance-house, or gathered the elder men inside our tent and enquired into their customs and beliefs.

Compared with the Eskimos of Alaska, these natives were astonishingly primitive. Their language contained no word for any number beyond six. I induced a woman to count on her fingers, and she began, in her own tongue, "one, two, one." I corrected her, and she started again, "one, two, three." There she stopped, and a man standing beside her said "four." Both had forgotten the words for the next two numbers, considering everything above four as many. Yet they were not so primitive as to be easily short-changed in any transaction, for they could separate a pile of articles into groups of three or four and count them with tolerable accuracy. A man to whom I gave only nineteen cartridges instead of twenty fitted them into an empty box, discovered the error, and indignantly demanded the missing round.

These people lacked, too, the artistic skill for which their kinsmen in other places are famous. I distributed pencils and paper to several adults, both men and women, and asked them to draw sketches of people, houses, caribou, and anything else they cared to attempt. The results were amusing, similar to what we should expect from a child of six. Even my chart they were unable to follow. One man, more intelligent than the rest, seemed to grasp that a certain

29: Jenness E-5 (1914-1916) 1959
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line might represent the coast along which he had recently been travelling; but when I asked him to name and point out the positions of the capes and streams he had passed on the way, he placed his finger indifferently on places as far apart as Victoria Island and Great Bear Lake. Yet an Eskimo of northern Alaska, who was unable to read and had never held a pencil in his hand, once drew me a remarkably accurate outline of the Colville River and all its tributaries, besides many vivid sketches of camp scenes and the hunting of seals and caribou.

Among the specimens I bought at this time was a large lamp which we immediately put to use for warming up our tent. It was made from soft soapstone, and shaped like an enormous saucer cut in half. We filled it with crushed seal-blubber, and along the straight front edge arranged the wick of cotton-grass seeds, which are not unlike cotton-wool. The lamp, when burning perfectly, gave a low smokeless flame an inch high and about sixteen inches long, quite sufficient to keep us comfortably warm even with the door partly open; but as neither Palaiyak nor I were very skilful in adjusting the wick a thin layer of soot began to form over the inside of the tent. We hired two little girls to keep the dogs away when we were absent, and my "daughters," as the people laughingly called them, gradually assumed responsibility also for the lamp, which they managed to perfection. I rewarded them